

SOCIAL ACTION

PRIMER

BY MARGUERITE H. BRO
AND ALFRED SCHMALZ



SOCIAL ACTION

National Organ of the Council for Social Action



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by Margueritte H. Bro
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Religion and Social Action

Whether our grandfathers were church members or not, the chances are that they knew right well what the visiting evangelist meant when he said, "Are you saved?" In some Congregational and Christian churches that was a favorite slogan of preachers. Standing before a huge audience at the end of an hour's stalwart preaching, the minister would shout the challenge, "Let those who are saved stand up." And the saved stood. Not diffidently or apologetically, but with assurance.

Today it is different. Last June at a great denominational gathering, the leader of a rather large discussion group composed of ministers and lay-leaders experimentally asked the old question, "How many here feel that they are saved?"

One woman stood.

And she became exhibit A. In the days which followed, the group peppered her with questions—what did she mean "saved"; saved from what; saved for what; how much saved; how long had she been saved; was her salvation permanent; could she prove that she was saved; who cared whether or not she was saved; and other more urgent, skeptical questions than these.

Why the difference between the generations? How could our grandparents be so sure and we so uncertain about salvation? More—how could they be so concerned and we so uninterested? The simplest answer is, of course, that they thought

of salvation as a purely personal matter while we know ourselves for the social composites that we are. When the social-economic world is shattered about us, we have small assurance of "salvation" of redemption from "lostness," even though our consciences are crystal and our motives a translucence of unselfishness. For all practical purposes we cannot consider ourselves personally "saved" when we know ourselves to be socially "lost."

"Salvation," then, for us is a more intricate process than for our fathers. Our many-angled responsibility is likely to become a deeper "lostness" which is further complicated by the fact that we are a bit indiscriminate in our saving processes. We would know that we were queer if we began to dash about throwing fire extinguishers to drowning men and life-saving belts to men in burning buildings. We would suspect our own sanity if we gave food to those smothering, and hurried pulmotors to the starving. But socially we make equivalent blunders and then wonder why the mortality rate is so high.

Adapt Message to Existing Needs

We need to save people *where they are lost*, and the immediate "lostness" of our generation is largely economic and social. We preach patience to the unemployed, we electrocute individuals who kill their fellows when they never had a chance to love them, we lock up the stealers of bread and then feed them, we segregate blacks and wonder why they don't behave like whites. We shuffle our means and ends all together in one pack, which we proceed to deal out indiscriminately.

In concrete terms, economic "lostness" means for us, first: poor housing, crowded living conditions, insufficient medical care, lack of food, inadequate clothing, curtailed education for our children, no travel, no books, no concerts, no first-hand touch with the out-of-doors. But economic defeat means also the gradual disintegration of our characters, of those values which Jesus made the ends of religion. Both losses occur si-

multaneously, interdependently, and both are, therefore, the concern of religion.

Of course, as individuals we may firmly intend to be exceptions to the rule. But unfortunately we know the facts, the figures, the graphs on the relation between economic defeat and personal disintegration. By and large, we—the underprivileged—will tend to care less how we get fed just so we have food; we will care less whether our clothes are earned honestly or dishonestly just so we are clothed; we will tend to cheat our landlord if possible and to “tap in” on our gas and electricity. We know that ours will be the children among whom delinquency ranks high; we know that from us and our neighbors “gangs” spring up, first semi-criminal and then criminal in their nature. We are the derelicts, the ones society must “look after” economically and morally. All this is implicit in our economic defeat *and we know it.*

The Perils of a Bad Environment

If anyone thinks that this picture is an overstatement, let the stoutest among us pick up his family and go to live among the economically defeated on their level. Let him leave behind the security of knowing that he can borrow money from his relatives or cash in his insurance policy; let him accept two rooms off a dark hall with a semi-public toilet; let him live “on relief” and wear out his last shoes hunting work; let him watch his wife cooking the indifferent food, repairing the cheap, worn clothes of the family; let his children go to the neighborhood school and “gang up” with the neighborhood children; let him watch them attending the cheap neighborhood movies, the cheaper dances (let him try to keep them apart from their fellows if he can); let him wait for a church to seek him out. Then ask him about his personal salvation. Even though the integrity of his soul is still untarnished, he will realize that there are degrees of salvation and that his salvation is so conditioned by elements outside himself that to be callous to those conditions is to defeat his own soul.

On the other hand, of course, the individual human personality cannot be altogether "saved" by economic sufficiency. His chances for integration are better when he is well-fed, clothed, housed, schooled, and generally provided with the material elements for growth. The mind exposed to beauty—the beauty of nature, of pictures, of music, of comfortable homes and well-kept humanity, of poise and symmetry in living—that mind is more likely to learn the lessons of beauty. Also, that mind is most likely to learn the habits of honesty and truth which does not have to weigh the value of an honest procedure against the pressure of physical hunger. And yet, there is a point at which an individual feels himself to be making free choices toward selfish or unselfish ends. All the psychologist's talk about the influence of environment, all theories that the processes of life are altogether mechanically determined—these things the religious mind scorns as "excuses" behind which he will not hide. However they may come into being, there are personal values which each man knows he must cultivate for himself. Even these values cannot stand alone, apart from their social context, but because of emphasis upon their inwardness we accord them the term "personal religion."

Realistically combining social and personal religion is our generation's most difficult task. Let us consider for a moment the matter of religion and economic change.

Religion and Economic Change

Capitalism, we are told, has dominated society too long; some more "social" attitude must prevail toward labor, profits and investment. The average individual is a bit hazy as to what exactly capitalism is, but if pressed for definition he would probably agree that it describes industry based upon the theory that invested capital, after it has paid wages, rent, and interest, gathers to itself the remainder of the earnings. Upon this general principle the capitalistic system has grown up.

In our day, it is said, this economic system must be modified.

By and large, wages received by the individuals who have contributed the work to industry have been too small a proportion of the gains. Society must regulate itself so that "profits" are more evenly divided among the human family; increased wages will mean a higher standard of living, which in turn will mean the participation of a larger number in the creative pursuits of leisure which, in turn, leavens the whole of society.

But it is one thing for the economist to set down this high ideal and quite another thing for the business man objectively to scrutinize the accepted system which he has more or less unconsciously helped to build. The business man must think in terms of his own investment of time, of energy, of brains, in terms of his family's welfare, in terms of his "success" as measured by the standards of his fellows. It takes a great deal of social imagination—of Christian imagination—to scrutinize an economic order which for him and his family is working well enough. It takes an even larger measure of devotion to society—to fellow human beings—purposefully to set about modifying such an economic order when the chances seem to be that his own family may lose out in the shifting process.

It is indeed a sort of cosmic "doing unto others" never before required of one generation. Whether Christian people have the courage even to put aside their fears and study the question has not yet been proven. A few isolated groups, a few churches, have brought this great human problem into the light of forum presentation, of group discussion, of personal study. But in the main the church is afraid to trust itself to think, especially to think aloud. Here is indeed a calling to account of the integrity of "social" religion.

But the social side is only half, even in a consideration of the capitalistic system. Frequently the "capitalists," beneficiaries of the system which made it possible for them to accumulate wealth in a greater or lesser degree, are those who also have carried the benevolent enterprises of their generation. We all know them; they fill our churches; they are our

grandfathers and fathers and husbands and friends. They made money in the way money is made, seldom analytic regarding the system, sometimes apologetic regarding its necessities. But they also understood the need for associated charities, for church extension programs, for the foreign missionary enterprise. They gave generously; frequently they gave more than they could well afford. They were not salving their consciences, either, but exercising the finest prerogatives of character. They were honest and generous and unselfish.

Can we scrap a system—or modify it drastically—and still conserve these values of honesty, generosity and unselfishness which have made great souls among us? That, too, is a religious question. Certainly to modify the system alone will bring about no millennium. The ranks of labor have their own share of unscrupulous leaders; even a perfect system makes no guarantee of human unselfishness. Unscrupulous dealings can find their way into any set-up. To see that fact *not* as an excuse to evade change but as an added responsibility for directing that change—this is the duty of religious persons.

Religion as Broad as Life

Indeed, there is no other way to be a "religious" person except by making one's basic task the furtherance of human personality, both one's own and that of others. Every great religious leader has sensed this deep compulsion, Jesus more than any other. "Life" is Christianity's word for "religion." In the whole Bible the word "religion" appears but three times while the word "life" is written or implicit on almost every page. The books of the law, of history, of prophecy, of poetry, are built of the very materials of life: they depict human beings living together under tensions of conflicting wills, dominant desires, confused by achievement and disaster, longing and frustration, power and weakness, love and hate. Jesus talks continually of life: "life everlasting," "life eternal," "new

life," "way of life," and finally that sentence which is the dominant note in his entire message, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Amazing, is it not, how long it has taken the church to catch up with Jesus' idea of the value and sacredness of human personality, how slow we have been to see the kingdom of heaven on earth as a state of out-going mutual respect among individuals? How long we concentrated on a some-place heaven in order that we might push aside the burden of reorganizing our immediate lives with their complex inter-relationships. It was inevitable that interest in such a "heaven" should wane as the possibilities of a high degree of control over this life began to become apparent to a generation which is seeing "psychology" and "sociology" and "economics" taking their place as sciences. Together they may help us to find new orientation and hence new strength in achieving our religious ends.

"Personal religion" and "social religion" can no more exist separately than a circle exists without its center and circumference. They are parts of a whole. In man's most public moments of speech and action, he is controlled by an inner integrity—or lack of it—which he feels to be his own. And on the other hand, in man's most intimate moments of prayer he is still surrounded by his unseen fellows who have taught him by word and action all he knows of the values he calls "good" and the personality he calls "God." Thus, personal growth and social responsibility are inseparable parts of the Christian way. (They are parts of the Christian way even when those who walk that way do not profess to be Christians.) Sincere professing Christians who are personally devout but unaware that life lays upon them any responsibility for society, touch but half of religion. Therefore, the social task of the church is presented not alone as the individual's enlarging duty toward his fellow-men but as his only access to the abundant life.

The Church's Social Action Program

When the average church member sees the words "social action" his mind works something after this fashion: "'Social'—now, does that mean 'society' or does it mean socialism? One can't be sure these days. If it means 'society' then probably we ought to be interested because, after all, society certainly needs help from someone."

"But 'action'—action can have only one meaning and that is 'doing something.' Doing something about society is all very well if we knew what to do. But we don't. And as soon as we begin even to talk about what we ought to do for society, everyone will have a different idea and we're likely to end up by splitting the church."

"Personally, it seems to me the church had better keep away from these social issues. They're too confusing and divisive. I believe the church is the place for worship. If each individual would get right with God and do the fair thing by his fellowmen, then we wouldn't need programs of social action."

Thus is social action disposed of by a portion of the Protestant church membership. We all know the people who reason—or soliloquize—in such manner. Our friends are among them, some of our relatives, and frequently ourselves. We are earnest, we are usually dependable, but we are not pioneers. By and large, we will maintain the progress society has made; we will not violate our country's laws nor take liberties with accepted values; we will carry the bulk of the church budget, including foreign missions, teach the Sunday school classes, accept responsibility on the official board and other committees. We may not be of much help to the current confusion but neither will we become a divisive factor in the church life. When we read the text about being "in the world but not of it," we accent the last phrase.

However, there are others, not better than the first group

nor more willing to serve, but somewhat different. They know that an individual cannot be fair to his fellowmen abstractly and that ignoring a responsibility is as unchristian as an actual misdeed to one's fellowman. The text of this group is the much-quoted and seldom understood verse, "Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you." Their soliloquy runs after this fashion:

" 'Social action'—it is all around us. Whether we know little or much, we are voting our opinions and paying our share of the bills for such things as old-age pensions and unemployment insurance. If we keep still on child labor, we play into the hands of its proponents; if we don't do something for peace, we're piling up the assets for war. It looks as if we cannot in all honesty escape the current confusions of democracy and so we will just have to understand as far as possible and to act upon that understanding. Unfortunately, we can act without thinking. Perhaps if we *thought*, it would be easier to act—to act with a measure of wisdom, even, possibly, to act as Christians."

It is this second group who are the material for the social action leadership of the church. Some of them, obviously, are to be found among the present leadership of the local church. It was they—and others like them—who first saw the missionary program when it was an experiment in pioneering; it was they who started the Sunday School and an educational program for the church. It is always they who preempt new claims in the name of the church and humanity.

Others of like mind are now on the edge of the church impatient with the church's timidity in large-scale brotherhood. Possibly they are still members of the local church, but frankly uninterested in its usual program. It is from these individuals, who already sense the implications of Christianity in the modern world, that your social action committee will probably be chosen.

The Social Action Committee

The first thing to be determined is whether or not your church needs a special committee to develop its social action program. You may be so well organized, so highly departmentalized, that a new committee would defeat your ends. If you are beginning your social action program in the women's organization, the chances are that you have machinery already set up for the formation of study groups, for the promotion of programs, for the selecting of projects. If you are beginning among the men, there may already be a committee which sponsors forum discussions. Or among the young people, you may find a social relations or international relations group which will serve as the logical nucleus.

If possible, begin where you are with what you have. As soon as you have too much content for the existing container, too much social action for one department of the church, then you may more easily consider the matter of a special committee for the whole church.

But perhaps your church wants a social action committee. Perhaps it has decided to begin a new program of social action, to "enlarge the place of its tent" and to seek earnestly to find a closer relationship in understanding and action between its members and the social-economic society of which they are a part. There is, no doubt, a certain verve and determination in a new committee created for this particular task.

If it is possible, your church will appoint to such a committee persons who have had some experience in dealing with social issues: a teacher, a lawyer, a doctor, a public official, an employer of labor, a labor leader, a representative of a cooperative. But a church need not be deterred from organizing a social action committee because only inexperienced persons are available. Inexperienced persons have less to unlearn. Their fresh objectivity may save them enough inherited prejudice to more than off-set their lack of experience. As in all creative tasks, the will-to-do is the prime requisite.

The Committee Meets

The committee meets. Being good Americans all, they will probably elect a chairman and secretary. The secretary will say, "Has anyone a paper and pencil?" and the chairman will say, "This committee was called because" And there you are, already started.

Fortunate the committee which has come into being because the group wishes to determine a particular course of action or to formulate an opinion on a specific issue. Thus one social action committee came into being when a neighborhood group, wishing to study cooperatives, were refused the use of the school building, although the city ordinance definitely stated that school buildings might be used for discussion and assembly by any group of tax-payers. The new social action committee was not particularly interested in cooperatives, but very much interested in the violation of civil liberties.

In another church a social action committee came into being when there was popular demand to know both sides of the issue over compulsory military training in certain colleges. The committee furnished information through an open forum and through printed statements from various sources. The church, as an organized group, took no public stand but the individual members of the church felt that their thinking had been so helpfully clarified that they asked the social action committee to prepare next a series of public forums on the Negro's place in this democracy.

But some communities are not aware of a specific situation needing their thought. Instead they start on the general premise that they need to understand their social responsibilities.

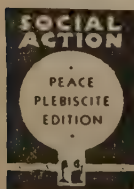
One of the liveliest social action committees was created for no specific issue. Indeed, the church felt that the town had no social problems; no one wished to discuss anything at all and certainly no one was moved to social action. By dint of much

personal persuasion—plus good coffee and many large sandwiches—the minister persuaded twelve men to meet in his cabin to talk about the only public institution upon which they appeared to have strong personal opinion—the constitution of the United States.

For eight months those men have met regularly and, having “decided about the constitution,” have proceeded to the practical matter of incorporating the town. Incorporation means the possibility of doing something about seven saloons in a town of two hundred but that, in turn, means a new school board and other bits of reorganization which only an individual community understands.

The by-product of this social action committee is the attendance at church of men who never dreamed they had any interest in going to church. The committee began as an academic study group and they ended—but, of course, there is no logical end as long as democracy and Christianity fight their long battle for the abundant life.

Subscribe for *Social Action*



A. *Before the meeting is adjourned, the members of your committee will be wise in subscribing for Social Action*, the semi-monthly magazine of the Council for Social Action. It is probably the largest single help which the Council can render the local church. On the other hand, increased subscription lists is one of the helps which the Council needs most from the churches. For your part, you will find the magazine a fundamental handbook for your committee.

One issue each month is a pamphlet on some specific social problem. The alternative issue each month is a general information number, telling what the churches are doing in the field, what specific issues are absorbing public interest, what other organizations are doing along the same lines, reviews of recent books and pamphlets, suggested projects.

The subscription price for *Social Action* is one dollar for the twenty issues per year. Or a bundle rate may be procured:

10 or more subscriptions to the same address 70c. each

50 or more subscriptions to the same address 50c. each

Social Action is being used increasingly as the basis of discussion groups in adult church school classes, women's missionary organizations, high schools, colleges, and other socially-minded groups. In this day when so much is written on such overlapping subjects as government, democracy, society, international relations, brotherhood, religion, it is nevertheless surprisingly difficult to find material on a given subject which is comprehensive, simple, and reliable. *Social Action* aims to provide exactly that sort of material. The pamphlets are written by men and women who speak authoritatively in their fields, who write objectively, as nearly without political or personal bias as is possible. From the point of view of the Council, you can perform no finer service than in spreading the information presented in this magazine.

Make a Report to the CSA



B. *At this first committee meeting, someone should be appointed to write to the Council for Social Action giving the names and addresses of all committee members, and reporting the particular interest which brought the committee together.* This sort of report is, of course, a genuine help to the Council in keeping records straight and in making it easy for us to send "the right things to the right people." But establishing contact with the Council is much more than that. We can send you, or tell you where to find, material on almost any subject you may care to know about. We keep files of newspaper and magazine clippings; we know the current book and pamphlet publications; we are up-to-date on pending legislation. If you will write us fully, telling us the background of your committee or your women's group or your study class—

whatever the organization interested in social action—we will help you develop a program in line with your special interests.

Set a Date for the Next Meeting



C. Don't adjourn your first meeting until you have set a date for the next meeting and made some plans for it. There are only two sorts of people who have irregular meetings: those who do not have much to think about or act about, and those who have too much to crowd into a routine schedule. If you are in the first class,

the only thing you can do is dig yourselves out of it by adopting a regular program. If you are in the second class, you are already at work and have passed the need for this pamphlet.

The Committee Educates Itself

In a real sense, it is self-education which makes a committee, or an individual, grow. When one feels his social responsibility keenly, he does not rest content until he becomes sufficiently instructed to act with what he honestly feels to be a measure of wisdom. "Seek wisdom and pursue it" is a fine social action text.

The following specific instructions will be useful, if only in making your group think up better procedures.

Study Your Pamphlets and Magazine



A. Members should read every issue of Social Action. The obvious reason is that you will probably have no readier access to the body of information which you wish to make your own. A second reason is that the magazine will keep you in touch with the things which other groups, similar to your

own, are thinking and doing. A third reason—and a very important one—is that the magazine is still in the making. We

trust it will always remain in the making, both as to policy and content. In a real sense, you are the editor: the things which interest you will interest other people; the tasks you feel compulsory will also weigh heavily upon the minds of others. Interchange of opinion is indeed necessary if the Council for Social Action is to serve the churches to the fullest extent through the magazine.

Give Each Member a Special Responsibility



B. Each member should have one special responsibility for some specific social problem.

If he is an amateur, he will not want to add to his own confusion by attempting to cover too much ground. If he is a specialist, there is no danger of his making that mistake. There are a variety of issues to choose from, among them: war; racial discrimination; unemployment and relief; labor standards; social security; child labor; liquor and temperance; gambling; civil liberties; compulsory military training; cooperatives. When considering a specific problem, such as war, the topic may be broken down into its many phases and each member of the committee become his own unit of research.

Remember the Study Packets



C. Remember that the Council for Social Action has already prepared packets of material on the following subjects: SOCIAL SECURITY; CHILD LABOR; THE NEGRO IN AMERICA; MILITARISM IN EDUCATION; CIVIL LIBERTIES; others are in the making. These packets contain pamphlets, magazine reprints, study outlines, book digests, and program material—even hymns, scripture, poetry, and prayers for public meetings. The packets cost 25c. complete.

Try Some Planned Discussions



D. *Some of your committee meetings may be round-table discussions at which each member presents his findings.* At other times, the committee may wish to invite an outside speaker to its own meeting—a labor leader, an employer, a relief director, a manager of a consumers' cooperative, anyone who can speak upon the verities of his own experience in a given line. A competent speaker before your own small group is a very fine "educational device" because you can keep your discussion informal and specific.

The Committee Discovers Its Community

All too few of us really know our own community. By and large, we dwell apart; our friends are counterparts of ourselves in interests, in living conditions, in ambitions, defeats, and problems. Learning to know the whole of a community is a difficult and a rewarding task. A few individuals, such as Jane Addams, learn to know their immediate community so thoroughly and so genuinely that they can eventually think of the world in community terms. Most of us do well to begin with restricted areas.

We sometimes succeed best when we go outside our customary interests and throw ourselves unreservedly into a problem. For instance—perhaps you are a housewife absorbed in the affairs of your home, your children's education, your church. But you decide that you can at least lend society the undergirding of intelligent opinion. You choose to begin your social education by studying the general subject of industrial standards and labor problems.

Industrial Standards and Labor Problems



Perhaps you commence by thoughtfully reading the newspaper (a reliable newspaper) and you are surprised to find how many news items fall into your clipping basket. Apparently you have chosen a live subject. You then consult some of your fellow citizens who have had experience in this field; you hunt out the public

affairs meetings, the forums, the lectures which bear upon your new interest.

Then, if you wish, you may write to the U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C., asking for bulletins relating to the industries in your immediate section of the country. The Department of Labor is constantly making surveys of industrial conditions throughout the land; many of these bulletins are not technical; they frequently disclose more comprehensive facts than you find in your newspaper. You may also write to the Department of Labor in your own state, addressing your letter to the State House in your capital, asking for bulletins on industrial conditions in the state. The Department can supply you with facts on hours of work in different industries, wage levels, and so forth.

Another source of information is the State Federation of Labor, located in the capital of your state, into which local labor unions are federated. It carries on an extensive work in propaganda and labor legislation. The Chamber of Commerce and local labor unions will be able to provide information. Further information can be procured from such organizations as the League of Women Voters, the Consumers League, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., and the Women's Trade Union League. For books and magazine articles consult your library and write to the Council of Social Action.

When all the available facts are in, you may wish to test some of them in your own neighborhood. For instance, your

state probably has a minimum-hour law for women. Is it enforced? Look closely at your nearest Ten Cent Store; ascertain the number of hours the girls are supposed to work; note whether that time includes the after-closing time which they put into rearrangement of stock. Find out if they are among the clerks who, when being hired, are asked to sign a card stating that they live at home and are not dependent upon their wages for their entire support. Find out, if you can, how many of them really must depend upon their own support.

Then, if the law is being broken and you feel impelled to "act," talk over with your committee your proposed action. Obviously, you do not want the girls to lose their jobs because of your interference in behalf of justice. How can you work with them to secure adequate wages and enforcement of the minimum-hour law? Certainly there are techniques to be worked out so that informed church people can make themselves into pressure groups for the adjustment of such specific injustices.

Sooner or later, you will find that human nature is much the same on both sides of the labor fence. Not all of those who work are earnest and good, but abused employees; not all of those who direct labor are generous and kindly but misguided employers. There is wisdom and goodness on both sides. There is also selfishness on both sides. You may find it difficult sometimes to hold fast to such a social objective as the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively when you discover unworthy leadership in a specific labor organization. And yet you cannot walk away from the problem. It is all the more needful of your help because it is thus complicated. In the closely knit industrial world, becoming our brother's keeper becomes a sterner, more relentless necessity than we can know before we take up the responsibility.

After you have struggled through one specific problem you may still be an amateur as regards the settlement of labor dis-

putes, but you are no longer an amateur Christian for you are going about your Father's business in an adult, realistic fashion. Intelligent opinion may still be your greatest service—but you know now that it is a great service.

Unemployment and Relief



Unfortunately, unemployment and relief are not questions to be debated academically. They are among the most immediate of our social problems. Almost every town in the United States must deal with unemployment, must administer relief. Almost every citizen is paying, directly or indirectly, the costs of public relief.

But our chief consideration is deeper than relief; it is the basic consideration of one human being's concern for other humans. Probably it is the oldest problem of religion. It emerged with "the dawn of conscience" when man first comprehended his own personal responsibility for other persons. Because the problem is immediate and personal, because its settlement cannot be put off until the perfect scheme is devised, because we are all expressing ourselves now through our taxes, our social security legislation, and our community planning, unemployment and relief afford an excellent place for the social action group to begin.

If your problem is thus a specific one, your beginning is both easier and harder: easier because you may go after definite facts relating to a given situation; harder because you will have to make up your minds and determine a course of action before you have any wide base of understanding upon which to base an opinion.

If there is no specific relief issue in your community, you may start on a more comprehensive educational program—the education being directed at yourselves. You may first interview the head of your town or city Department of Public Welfare, asking for facts relative to the number of relief cases,

the amount of relief that is given, the extent of medical aid, the proportion of various races on relief, the relation between local and federal relief budgets, the standard of living which the relief payments permit in your community.

Usually there are also private agencies which can be consulted. For example, the Family Welfare Society, the Community Chest, the Associated Charities. From these private agencies you can learn the extent of the relief load before the depression, you can find out the inadequacy of the relief payments for certain families, and what things must be done to supplement relief and improve standards.

Through your town or city hall you can find out the name of the person in charge of the W.P.A. in your district. Consult him for facts about work relief. His opinion will be worth a hundred vague comments of casual onlookers who usually let two or three cases, which he knows personally, stand for the whole problem. The director of the W.P.A. will tell you whether or not the unemployed and the relief clients in your neighborhood are organized. Perhaps they should be: Perhaps only through organization can they be conscious of their responsibility to industry and of industry's responsibility to them. Study the Workers Alliance: Consult its officials and get the point of view of those within and without the organization.

You may decide to begin by holding public hearings for the unemployed. Write to the industrial relations secretary of the Council for Social Action to find out how such hearings are being conducted. Address: Frank W. McCulloch, 5757 University Avenue, Chicago.

For additional information, write to Harry L. Hopkins, Federal Emergency Relief Administrator, Washington, D. C. The further you go into this problem, the further you will feel you have to go into it. Bear in mind that the community and the government has to proceed on some sort of plan even

when the plan is patently not an ideal one. Therefore, your criticism, to be valuable, needs to be constructive.

Child Labor



On the face of it, there would seem to be no two possible opinions among Christians on the child labor problem. But as a matter of fact, you will find four attitudes on the question. First, you will find a group of those who, like yourself, do feel deeply that child labor must be abolished in these United States. This group may not be adequately informed; it probably lacks leadership. But that can be remedied.

The second group are the well-intentioned people who feel vaguely "sorry that children have to work" but cannot be counted upon to do anything about it. Many of this second group are in the churches.

The third group are those who agree that child labor is lamentable but who have what they declare to be "sound" reasons for objecting to federal regulation. Some of this group are honest enough, but callous to the fact that the question of states' rights is small consolation to children toiling sometimes twelve to fourteen hours a day in beet, cotton, or tobacco fields, or in factories.

With the fourth group you will have less personal contact but a more clear-cut issue. They are the group who want to continue the employment of children in industry because child labor is profitable to them.

First, find out whether or not your state has ratified the federal child labor amendment. Find out when its ratification will again be taken up in your legislature; who championed the bill last time; why it failed to pass; who will speak for it officially this year in your state assembly. Go directly to your representatives and state senators; find out their attitude; publicize your findings. Remember that where votes

count, the expression of opinion also counts. If you are the means of getting a thousand personal letters sent to a representative, he may not read them all but he will take note of them. Connect with the women's groups who will be lobbying for the bill; exchange speakers with groups who have been working for the passage of the ratification—with the League of Women Voters, the Y.W.C.A., and like organizations.

All the time you are working, remember that facts are your best argument. Appoint one of your committee, if at all possible, to make some first-hand investigation. What one sees for himself is worth a dozen books on the subject. Write to the National Child Labor Committee, 419 Fourth Avenue, New York, for their latest bulletin. Subscribe for *Child Welfare*, the official paper of the national organization. Get permission to reprint articles and pictures from it in your local church bulletins or denominational state paper.

Write for the most recent child welfare numbers of *Social Action*. See that a literature table in the foyer of your church, or in some other prominent place, keeps child labor bulletins before the congregation.

Arrange public programs, or programs in your women's organization, wherever possible. A fine set of stereopticon slides can be procured from the National Child Labor Committee.

Get the children of your church interested. Appoint someone to tell five-minute stories before the church school. Allow the children to contribute to the financing of the campaign against child labor.

And finally, if you discover in your church opposition to the child labor, arrange for public discussion of both points of view. See that the opposition is ably represented and then procure the best available speaker on behalf of the amendment. Make room for open discussion.

Varied Programs



Obviously, these suggestions of procedure are simply illustrative. No two groups face exactly the same situation. Some social action committee will want to make a general survey of the social needs of the day; others will prefer to concentrate on a single issue.

Education of the Church

The task of the social action committee is not, of course, merely that of self-education. As has been pointed out, its effectiveness depends upon its ability to enlarge the social-mindedness of the total church membership. Educating a small group of persons who wish to become educated in social-economic problems is one thing, while educating a larger, more indifferent and perhaps hostile group is "another thing entirely." To make any educational program effective with the larger group you will need common sense, an abundance of reliable information, and a sense of humor. Humor means perspective, and it requires perspective plus great tolerance for human nature in order to deal vigorously with such a social problem as child labor and, at the same time, not give way to complete scorn for the indifference to the problem which is shown by others of our fellow men.

Preaching



As long as church programs are built around the Sunday morning preaching service, the minister will be the key to the social education of the church. If he himself has comprehension of the present social-economic problems, then his sermons will be colored by his understanding. He will welcome your co-operation because he will be the first to realize that an informed congregation removes from his shoulders the burden

of proof for his own constructive ideas. He and his congregation can begin to climb from a high plateau of mutually accepted fact.

To be sure, there are some ministers who do not think in social terms—their seminary courses were full of other matters. When it comes to the impersonal social sins of their generation, they are as bewildered as the most confused members of their congregation. But the chances are that they will meet you more than half way in your effort to make Christianity real in the life about you. When a minister sees a group of his church members earnestly seeking a new method of service to humanity, when he sees them studying, discussing, acting on their conviction, he is almost certain to lend the support of his interest and experience. Most ministers are sincere; many of them are fearless. When it comes to carrying out a course of action which seems to you the honest, Christian procedure, you will probably find your minister leading the procession.

Social Action Programs in Church Organization

Every use should be made of existing church groupings: the men's club, the women's association, the young people's organization, the church school. Consult the heads of these societies, urging them to set apart at least an occasional meeting for programs on social issues. The Council for Social Action will help you plan such meetings.

Forums, Study Groups, Panel Discussions



Many churches have set up a series of Sunday night meetings for a forum on social issues; they use outside speakers and invite the public. Others use their church suppers as opportunities to present speakers on social problems. Still others organize small study groups for specific inquiry; the group meets six or eight times and then disbands, or turns to another

consideration. Probably the small study group is the best educational method. In it there is more incentive to read and much more incentive to participate in discussion.

Some groups find the panel discussion provocative. This method brings together on the platform several persons who are authorities on the chosen subject—or who have at least read thoroughly on the assigned topic. The chairman guides their conversation, which is “overheard” by the audience. A good panel discussion has all the excitement of the old-time debate which so stirred our forefathers in the days when the church was being “saved” or “lost” theologically. But a poor panel discussion is perhaps the surest means of killing and entombing public interest, all on the same occasion. Therefore, it pays to make sure of your panel.

Literature Table, Book Service, Bulletin Board



There was a time when designating the reading matter on the average church reading table as “literature” was something of an optimistic euphonism. But now some of the pamphlets on subjects of current interest are written with the strength and simplicity which marks the best writing of our time.

The reading table should be set up in the foyer or vestibule or parlor of your church, some place where people *are*, for in this modern day the library goes to the people until the people get the habit of coming to the library. As important as the books upon the table, is the individual behind the table. Too many churches use as librarian some well-meaning man or woman who insists upon “doing something” but whose personality is too angular for other committee work. Let us remember that the man behind the literature table has a genuine service to render which will be just as large, or as small, as himself. If he has read the material upon the table, he is

unusual. If he understands the contents of his offerings, he is unique. Well worth your time to find that person.

Beside *Social Action*, you will find useful many of the pamphlets of the Foreign Policy Association, the National Child Labor Committee, the Federal Council of Churches, and the new books on social issues. Write to the Council for Social Action for more complete suggestions for your literature table. We will tell you month by month what the well-read man and woman are thinking about. You will also find that your community library will cooperate in lending displays of current books and in buying the books in which a number of persons are interested.

The bulletin board is—you know what the bulletin board is. Sometimes it is the place where the janitor hangs lost mittens, and the minister posts notices of union meetings which he does not really expect anyone to attend but which surely ought to be posted. But in other churches the bulletin board is actually a center of attention. The silent and accusing poster can outshout the loudest sales-talk. A poster showing the rise in child labor during 1936 will say more than a man can say standing by the door admonishing the department worshippers to vote for the child labor amendments. Write to the Council for Social Action explaining your bulletin board needs and ambitions. Learn to plan ahead for special days (listed below), changing the posters, graphs, clippings on the bulletin board for three or four successive Sundays preceding the special day. Program material can be obtained by communicating directly with the Council for Social Action.

ARMISTICE SUNDAY—the Sunday before Armistice Day.

CHILD LABOR SUNDAY—the last Sunday in January.

RACE RELATIONS SUNDAY—the second Sunday in February.

LABOR SUNDAY—the Sunday before Labor Day.

Education Should Lead to Action

The purpose of deepening the social conscience of the church membership through educational activities is to help such persons to make their influence felt in determining local or national or international policies. We must put our citizenship and our Christianity into action. This is what "social action" means.

A social action committee in a church is the means by which church members can be helped to do this. Thus the committee has a double function: it should (1) bring facts about social conditions to the attention of church members, and it should (2) inform them what specific action seems to be in line with Christian idealism as they understand it.

How facts on social issues are to be discovered, and how church groups can be informed about them, has already been discussed. But what is the relation of the social action committee to the church from the standpoint of "action"?

Several things should be recognized. Our churches do not yet know to what extent they want such a committee to have power to commit the church body as such to specific social proposals. They do not know what sort of "action" their committee or the church as an institution should engage in. Each new social action committee must face this uncertainty. Churches will not all evolve the same philosophy or policy. The Council for Social Action does not ask them to do so. We are still in the stage of discovering on the basis of local experience what the most desirable procedure may be.

Such questions as these may well be raised:

1. Should the social action committee periodically recommend that the church as such take action on particular issues? For example, should meetings be called to take action in support of the federal child labor amendment, a neutrality bill, or a local relief policy?

2. Should the social action committee seek to secure the support of organizations within the church, such as the men's club, the women's society or the young people's group, in behalf of some particular proposal or policy concerning justice and peace?

3. Should the social action committee be empowered to speak for the church as a body, either with or without specific authority from the church membership?

4. Should the social action committee be given freedom to act according to its own best judgment, but required to make it clear to the public that it speaks only for the committee?

5. Should the social action committee limit its function to securing such support as it can from individual church members, these individuals to act simply as individuals, without committing the church as an institution?

We believe that the social action committee from its own experience, and the church as a whole from its experience with the committee, can alone make this decision with regard to policy. There may be occasions when the issue is so clear-cut that the church as a whole might want to express itself, for instance with respect to protecting children against exploitation in industry. There may be other occasions when some organization within the church wants to go on record in support of a particular legislative act, such as a neutrality bill. The church may want to empower the committee to speak as a committee of the church in some local or state hearing, perhaps with regard to unemployment or relief. There may be times when the controversial nature of the issue suggests to the wisdom of interested church members acting simply as individuals, for instance, in a local labor dispute.

The Council for Social Action hopes to be able increasingly to record the experience of social action committees, so that churches may be helped to develop a wise policy.

Examples of Social Action

What have individuals and groups done in the way of "action"? The following is suggestive:

They have exposed unjust and inhuman conditions of labor, bad housing, discriminatory treatment of racial groups.

They have joined, and supported in financial and other ways, organizations engaged in some particular social task — a peace agency, a consumers' cooperative, an inter-racial committee, a public forum.

They have written their legislators, state and federal, with regard to social and peace legislation, and have personally interviewed them.

They have attended hearings on new legislation, where they have stated their opinion.

They have sought means of ending industrial conflict by mediation, arbitration, and the protection of the rights of employers and workers to organize.

They have organized public opinion to support the just punishment of vigilantes and other violators of civil liberty.

They have worked for the abolition of compulsory military training in schools and colleges.

Therefore and finally—a social action committee, like a church itself, is exactly as meaningful as its members. In these days, men and women of imagination can, if they wish, "go into all the world" instead of travelling the well-worn paths of yesterday's service. Men and women of determination can have that mind in them "which was also in Christ Jesus" instead of learning by rote the spiritual lessons of last year. Men and women of courage can become "fellow-workers together with Him" instead of working in their own small strength. They can . . . if they will. Life attests it—the lives of the intrepid ones who have led us thus far, the surge of life within, which pushes us on, and the leadership of one who said, "I am the Life."

Selected Readings

- The Protestant Churches and the Industrial Crisis*, by Edmund B. Chaffee. Macmillan, 1933, 243 pp., \$2.00.
- Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus*, by Charles F. Kent. Scribners, 1918, 360 pp., \$1.75.
- Christian Faith and Economic Change*, by Halford E. Luccock. Abingdon, 1936, 208 pp., \$2.00.
- Christian Materialism*, by F. J. McConnell. Missionary Ed. Movement, 1936, 125 pp., 60c. (paper). Inquiries into getting, spending and giving money.
- Moral Man and Immoral Society*, by Reinhold Niebuhr. Scribners, 1932, 284 pp., \$2.00.
- Christianity and the Social Crisis*, by Walter Rauschenbusch. Macmillan, 1907, 429 pp., \$2.00.
- Our Economic Morality*, Harry F. Ward. Macmillan, 1929, 329 pp., \$2.
- Churches in Social Action—Why and How*, by James Myers, Council for Social Action, 1936, 32 pp., 10c.

Prayer and Poetry

- Challenge and Power*, by Wade C. Barclay. Abingdon, 1936, 207 pp., \$1.00. Meditations and prayers in personal and social religion for individual and group use.
- Poems of Justice*, compiled by T. C. Clark. Willet, 1929, 306 pp., \$2.50.
- Thunder Over Jerusalem*, by Allen E. Cross. Association Press, 1936, 64 pp., \$1.00. Poems of justice; a protest against all exploitation.
- The World's Great Religious Poetry*, ed. by Caroline M. Hill. Macmillan, 1928, 836 pp., \$2.00.
- Prayers for Self and Society*, by James Myers. Association Press, 1934, 30 pp., 15c.
- Prayers of the Social Awakening*, by Walter Rauschenbusch. Pilgrim Press, 126 pp., new printing, 50c.

How to Conduct Discussions

- How to Lead a Discussion*, by Leroy E. Bowman. Woman's Press, 1934, 31 pp., 35c.
- Creative Discussion*, by A. D. Sheffield. Association Press, 1933, 68 pp., 50c.
- Art of Conference*, by Frank Walser. Harper, 1933, 305 pp., \$3.00.